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THE STUDENT VOLUNTEER CONVENTION OF 1914

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Some days we are discouraged about Christianity. The world seems very evil and Christian enthusiasm sadly lacking. In such moments of depression those of us who were at the great convention which Professor Burton describes will recall the great hall, filled with thousands of the strongest of strong young lives, their intense interest and sane enthusiasm. Above all we shall recall that the convention represented a movement which has sent thousands of young men and women into the foreign field. Where in the history of the world is anything like this to be found? Why be pessimistic about the gospel when a new generation is consecrating itself to the propagation of the gospel?

The seventh International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions was attended by 3,984 students and professors representing 755 colleges and theological seminaries in the United States and Canada, by 279 missionaries and secretaries representing the mission boards of the United States and Canada, and by 768 editors, laymen, and special guests. These figures are themselves significant of the widespread interest of the colleges of the country in the subject of foreign missions. To one who believes in the foreign mission enterprise of the church, the presence of this great company of people in the convention hall at Kansas City was an inspiring sight.

But what did it really signify? Bigness is not necessarily greatness. What were the characteristics of the convention, and what does it promise for the future? No one could possibly hear all that was said, still less know all that was going on in the minds and hearts of four thousand students. But

one may record a few broad and deep impressions.

It was a catholic body—though not indeed all-inclusive. It was not a congress of religions. It was a distinctly Christian convention with no representatives of the non-Christian religions save a few in the student body. It stood, moreover, for so-called evangelical Christianity. There were no Roman Catholics or Unitarians on the program. But within these broad limits all denominations and all schools of thought were represented. Men of widely different opinions stood on the same platform to plead for the great things of the Kingdom, and felt no need or impulse to add to their plea any word of bitterness or controversy. Of course we know that there are still differences of opinion which not only keep us in separate denominations, but prevent full co-operation in Christian work at home and abroad. But there was no echo of these on the platform of the Kansas City convention. This is itself a significant fact, carrying with it

a forecast of the time when a common interest in a great enterprise shall soften asperities even though not annihilating differences of opinion.

The meetings were all characterized by a notable combination of calmness and earnestness. After the expressions of enthusiasm for the various institutions from which the delegates came and for the convention itself, which were permitted at the outset, there was an almost total absence of audible response from the audience. There was no applause, no outward evidence of excitement, no waves of emotion sweeping over the audience.

But this was by no means the reflection of apathy or indifference. It was a deeply earnest assembly, listening intently to every address, joining sympathetically with those who led in prayer, and heartily in the hymns. Few speakers ventured on humorous remarks, and these few stirred no more than a ripple of laughter on the surface of the deep seriousness of the assembly.

Coupled with seriousness was a notable openness of mind on the part of the student body. No one knows, of course, in how many instances young men and women sought out older friends or fellow-students to discuss the question of their personal duty, or how many in the silence of their own rooms reached important decisions respecting their future work. But the number of instances of the former kind that came unsought to one's knowledge seemed clearly symptomatic of a widespread openness of mind to the claims of Christ and his service and led one to believe that a large number of momentous decisions were reached—yet, again let

it be emphasized, not under excitement, but in quietness and calmness.

Being serious, the audiences were also discriminating. There were very few expressions, either in the great morning and evening assemblies, or in the many section conferences that filled the afternoon hours, that violated the canons of good taste and failed to deal fairly and seriously with a great opportunity. In the few instances in which there was such failure the response was fitted to the address. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," was the unspoken maxim of the convention.

What will the convention accomplish? No doubt many young men and women decided while at Kansas City, or will decide as a result of their attendance at the convention, to give themselves to foreign missionary service, and many of these will actually spend their lives in non-Christian countries. If it shall prove that some decided unwisely, the whole atmosphere of the convention gives reason to hope that the great majority of the decisions were of the kind that abide and that ought to abide. In this respect the convention must have been a healthful and helpful influence in the lives of the nearly four thousand delegates.

But perhaps even more far-reaching and significant will be the influence which will be exerted upon the moral and religious atmosphere of the colleges from which the students came and to which they have returned. No one who is closely in touch with the life of our American colleges and universities and who lays stress upon the moral aspects of life can doubt that there is great need of a purifying of moral life

and deepening of religious life in almost all of these institutions. A revival of religion in a student community cannot be in these days in its external features what it might have been two generations ago. It must be calm as well as deep, not stormy and excited. But there is no doubt that it is greatly needed. The greatest possibility of the Kansas City convention lies in this direction. A member of the faculty of a state university said, in effect, as the convention closed: "We are going back to ask the president of the university to lead in an effort to deepen and strengthen the religious life of the student body." The delegates from another university, assembled on their return journey,

resolved to begin at once an effort to deepen not simply the interest in foreign missions, but especially the religious life of the student body, while the non-volunteer members of the delegation determined to undertake the support of a man on the foreign field.

These events were probably only typical of many such. If the calm, deeply earnest spirit of the Kansas City convention can be reproduced in a goodly number of the 755 colleges and universities there represented, the future historian of college life in America may date from the year 1914 the beginning of a much-needed new era in the moral and religious life of American colleges.

THE MODERN SADDUCEE

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The Pharisee and the Sadducee have disappeared from history as Jewish sects, but their spiritual descendants are still to be found. The modern Pharisee has been more in evidence than the Sadducee. He has been pilloried, and has been made the butt of much rude jesting. To be called a Pharisee has been tantamount to being called a hypocrite, and everything savoring of Phariseism has been unsparingly condemned.

The Sadducee has been less in evidence but he is at length coming to his own. While the Pharisee, like his

modern prototype, the Puritan, is dying out the Sadducee is becoming a great multitude. It is no longer Phariseism that is the bane of religion but Sadduceism. There is hardly enough conviction left in some quarters out of which to make a good Pharisee. The religion of today is largely a thing of Sadducean softness and compromise.

With all his faults the Pharisee was a man to be respected, if not admired. The common people adored him and took him for the model saint. Narrow, bigoted, and intolerant he undoubtedly